*Note: I enrolled in a market beef project; my record book showed I lost money!*

Title: The Grocery Value
By Cindy A. Kinder, Area 4-H Extension Educator

I lost $200 dollars on my market beef project between my expenses and income as if I had sold the steer to the meat packer. However, I kept Cowboy for my freezer. I was curious as to the actual retail value of beef I have in the freezer. It cost me an additional $350 dollars to have him cut and wrapped. Was it worth it? Let's find out. I went to five different grocery meat cases and looked up the values of all the types of beef cuts I received. Table 1 shows the cuts of beef, the amount of each cut, and the high, low, average value and total cost.

Cowboy weighed 1350 pounds live, had a hot carcass weight of 861 pounds, and the amount of retail meat in my freezer should be approximately 603 lbs. (Actually there is 478 lbs due to my selection of cuts received). If you want an estimate of how much beef would be in your freezer take the live weight (1350) times 63% (861) then times 70% (603). 63% (dressing percentage) is the amount you receive in muscle and bone when the hide, head, hoofs and internal organs are removed. This number can be higher or lower depending on how much water and feed fill your calf has at the time of live weight.

Processing procedures and amount of external fat trim affect the amount of cutting loss. 70% is the average amount received when you remove excess fat, bone, cartilage, and shrink from the carcass. This number can range from 65% to 80%.
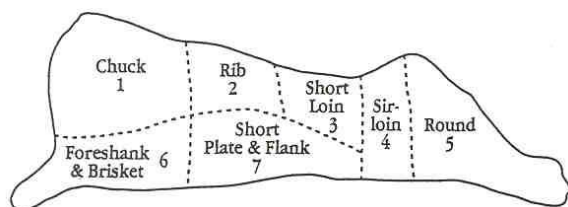
There are seven primal cuts to a beef carcass: chuck(shoulder), rib, short loin, sirloin, round, fore shank and brisket, short plate and flank. All steaks, roasts, and other retail cuts come from them. At the custom butcher you choose what you want done with each primal cut.

When you take your animal to the local butcher you get the following general choices as to how you want your meat packaged.

- The size (depth) of your steaks (.25 to 1.5 inch; .75 to 1 inch is most common)
- Number of steaks in a package (1-5)
- Sirloin tip steaks are usually cubed due to the toughness of the meat
- Do you want stew meat or burger
- Pounds of ground beef in a package (1, 1.5, and 2 lbs)
- Pounds of roast in a package (3-5 lbs)
- Tenderized/ cubed steaks
- Variety meats must be requested at time of harvest and include soup bones, tongue, tail, heart and liver

You need to have an idea of what you like to eat. My family eats a lot on the BBQ grill so steak, fajita strips, and burger is a must. My husband loves chicken fried steak (cube steak). We eat a few roasts and stew mostly in the winter and fall; I don't like the chuck cuts because they are usually tougher and have lots of cartilage and gristle. Plus, I have never found a good way to fix ribs or soup bones. Knowing this, I have the meat cutter custom cut to my needs.

I am feeding a family of 4 which includes 2 adults, a 7 year old and a 5 year old who love steaks. My steak packages have 3 or 4 steaks in them; I get 2 lbs burger packages and my roasts are 4-5 lbs. From the chuck I take the flat iron steaks, finger steaks and cube steaks but most of the chuck is ground into burger or stew meat. From the rib primal cut I receive rib and rib eye steaks, hamburger and sometimes a prime rib roast. From the short loin and sirloin I receive steaks which include; t-bone, porterhouse, tenderloin, and sirloin plus a sirloin roast. From the round primal cut I get rump and heel roasts, round steaks, finger steaks, and stew meat. The other primal cuts I have ground into hamburger.

Did I lose money? If I was to purchase all the meat from the grocery store it would cost me an average of $2,115.47. However, the quality grade (Select) at some of the stores evaluated was not the same as Cowboy (Choice). The stores with the higher values contained only Choice grade beef. Feeding my steer instead of purchasing the meat at the store saved me $647.69. Plus, I also have the satisfaction of knowing what was fed to my animal and can appreciate the hard work that went into making the beef.

Table 1: The cuts of beef, the amount of each cut, and the high, low, average value and total cost November/December 2008.

| Meat cut | # pkg | # lbs | Total lbs | High Value | Low Value | Avg. Value | High Cost | Low Cost | Avg. Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Chuck Primal Cut* | | | | | | | | | |
| Flat iron steaks | 4 | 1.95 | 7.8 | 6.99 | 3.49 | 5.24 | 54.52 | 27.22 | 40.87 |
| Finger steaks | 8 | 1.43 | 11.44 | 4.99 | 4.99 | 4.99 | 57.09 | 57.09 | 57.09 |
| Stew meat | 10 | 1.71 | 17.1 | 3.99 | 3.39 | 3.75 | 68.23 | 57.97 | 64.09 |
| Cube steaks | 8 | 1.36 | 10.88 | 4.39 | 3.2 | 3.89 | 47.76 | 34.82 | 42.32 |
| Hamburger | 106 | 2.29 | 242.74 | 4.29 | 2.07 | 2.94 | 1041.35 | 502.47 | 714.14 |
| *Round Primal Cut* | | | | | | | | | |
| Rump Roasts | 4 | 4 | 16 | 3.99 | 2.78 | 3.61 | 63.84 | 44.48 | 57.70 |
| Heel Roasts | 4 | 4.24 | 16.96 | 3.99 | 2.78 | 3.61 | 67.67 | 47.15 | 61.16 |
| Round steaks - Tenderized | 8 | 3.33 | 26.64 | 4.97 | 3.38 | 4.24 | 132.40 | 90.04 | 113.06 |
| *Rib Primal Cut* | | | | | | | | | |
| Rib eye steaks | 8 | 4.8 | 38.4 | 9.49 | 8.49 | 8.99 | 364.42 | 326.02 | 345.14 |
| *Short Loin/Sirloin Primal Cut* | | | | | | | | | |
| Porterhouse steaks | 6 | 4.72 | 28.32 | 7.49 | 7.49 | 7.49 | 212.12 | 212.12 | 212.12 |
| T-Bone steaks | 5 | 4.14 | 20.7 | 8.99 | 6.88 | 7.62 | 186.09 | 142.42 | 157.73 |
| Sirloin steaks | 5 | 2.43 | 12.15 | 6.99 | 4.49 | 5.63 | 84.93 | 54.55 | 68.38 |
| Sirloin Tip steaks | 6 | 2.31 | 13.86 | 4.98 | 3.2 | 4.19 | 69.02 | 44.35 | 58.07 |
| Sir Loin roast | 2 | 4 | 8 | 5.99 | 3.12 | 4.33 | 47.92 | 24.96 | 34.67 |
| Tenderloin steaks | 3 | 2.42 | 7.26 | 14.99 | 8.77 | 12.25 | 108.83 | 63.67 | 88.94 |
| | | | 478.25 | Total Purchase Price | | | 2606.19 | 1729.32 | 2115.47 |
| | | | | Feed Exp/Cut- Wrap | | | 1958.50 | 1958.50 | 1958.50 |
| | | | | Difference | | | 647.69 | -229.18 | 156.97 |

Note: Not all cuts were found at every store. Heel roast was not present at any location. Rump roast value was used. Finger steaks and Porterhouse steaks were found in only one location.